

# FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## **Mental Health Researchers and Chemists Issue a Consumer Warning Regarding CBD Vape Oils:**

### **A Press Release from the International Research Center on Cannabis and Mental Health and the Cannabis Chemistry Subdivision of the American Chemical Society**

(New York, NY) November 16, 2018 – Today, two nationally recognized groups announced a warning to consumers of CBD products. The two organizations are the International Research Center on Cannabis and Mental Health (IRCCMH) and the Cannabis Chemistry Subdivision of the American Chemical Society.

The IRCCMH is a grant funded research center based in New York, that focuses on providing education and research on cannabis and mental health. The Cannabis Chemistry Subdivision of the American Chemical Society is a group within the Division of Chemical Health & Safety that advocates for standardization, regulation, and best practices within the cannabis industry.

“We are incredibly concerned about the quality of many CBD products, and so-called counterfeit CBD products, that are commercially available to consumers. The products that are not manufactured and distributed under proper regulations or best practices represent a public health threat, which stigmatizes companies that are operating legally and ethically,” said Jahan Marcu, Ph.D., Co-founder of IRCCMH, Director of Experimental Pharmacology, and CANN Co-founder

“Patients think that what they read on the label always matches what is present in the product,” said Jan Roberts, LCSW, Co-founder of IRCCMH and Director of Translational Research. “However, we know that what is commercially available isn’t always what is promised. There is data demonstrating that some available CBD products can have enough THC to result in a positive drug screen,<sup>1</sup>” adds Roberts. Dr. Marcu of the IRCCMH co-authored a study published in JAMA last year, which is the first peer-reviewed publication documenting that the majority of CBD products purchased online were significantly different from what is listed on the label<sup>2</sup>.

An article published this month in Forensic Science International (Poklis, Mulder, & Peace. 2018) identifies additional chemical markers other than CBD that have been known to produce concerning results. Dextromethorphan, a chemical found in cough and cold medicines, has been identified along with the synthetic cannabinoid 5-fluoro MDMB-PINACA (5F-ADB). According to the article, 5F-ADB is a synthetic compound resembling natural cannabinoids that

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeadams/2018/10/18/marijuana-madness-this-is-how-cbd-oil-can-cause-a-failed-drug-test/#4aafbb12713b>

<sup>2</sup> Bonn-Miller, M. O., Loflin, M. J. E., Thomas, B. F., Marcu, J. P., Hyke, T., & Vandrey, R. (2017). Labeling Accuracy of Cannabidiol Extracts Sold Online. *Jama*, 318(17), 1708–1709. <http://doi.org/10.1001/jama.2017.11909>

is reported to produce euphoric and other psychoactive effects similar to that of THC. 5F-ADB is controversial as it has been reported in series of five non-fatal clinical intoxications after smoking “Spice” or “herbal preparation” to cause anxiety, confusion, psychomotor agitation, psychosis and tachycardia. In 2014, the Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) reported 2,311 incidents involving medical intervention or death involving 5F-ADB which resulted in its status as Schedule I drug in January 2017.”<sup>3</sup>

“Chemical health and safety should be paramount to both consumers and manufacturers in the cannabis industry,” said Andrew Pham, Current Chair of CANN, “One of the dangers from the lack of uniform regulatory standards, is that some people tend to create new products in a rush with novel ingredients, without evaluating their toxicity.”

Dr. Marcu adds, “Reports that describe synthetic cannabinoids being sold as counterfeit CBD products, blame them for a number of hospitalizations over the last year<sup>4</sup>. We encourage CBD manufacturers and producers to actively distinguish themselves from these questionable products, at a minimum by attaining 3<sup>rd</sup>-party certifications, accreditations, and ensuring proper training is being implemented at their facilities. This will allow companies to add logos or seals indicating GMP or equivalent compliance with industry and safety standards, which will help consumers patients, and caregivers make informed decisions about the products they use and help them avoid adverse events, such as hospitalizations from drug-drug interactions.”

IRCCMH is concerned as this can be a potential public health risk if psychological symptoms are exacerbated by public consumption of products that promote CBD but have additional potentially damaging substances that can negatively impact mental health functioning. IRCCMH and CANN promote regulated, standardized products that can guarantee public safety.

The synthetic drugs found in tested CBD vape cartridges are dangerous drugs due to their potency, ever changing composition, and unpredictable side effects. Recently synthetic designer drug products have faced serious quality control and contamination issues, and according to Panigrahi et. al. 2018., such products have been associated with multiple deaths and over 200 hospitalizations in the United States this year<sup>5</sup>. In order to guide appropriate patient treatment, it is important for health professionals and the public to be aware of the clinical picture presented by the use of such substances. Patients and their caregivers should be encouraged to only use products obtained through legal, licensed, or government regulated access points that are of a known provenance. Increasing awareness and clinical management of this and similar issues are a public health priority for both organizations.

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<sup>3</sup> Poklis, J.L., Mulder, H.A., & Peace, M.R. (2018). The Unexpected Identification of the Cannabimimetic, 5F-ADB, and Dextromethorphan in Commercially Available Cannabidiol E-liquids. *Forensic Science International*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.forsciint.2018.10.019>

<sup>4</sup> [https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6720a5.htm?s\\_cid=mm6720a5\\_w#T1\\_down](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/67/wr/mm6720a5.htm?s_cid=mm6720a5_w#T1_down)

<sup>5</sup> Panigrahi, B., Jones, B. C., & Rowe, S. P. (2018). Brodifacoum-contaminated synthetic marijuana: clinical and radiologic manifestations of a public health outbreak causing life-threatening coagulopathy. *Emergency Radiology*, 25(6), 715–718. <http://doi.org/10.1007/s10140-018-1628-5>

**About International Research Center on Cannabis and Mental Health (IRCCMH):**

[IRCCMH](#) is a research, education, and consulting institute located in New York City that is focused on cannabis and its impact on mental health. [IRCCMH](#) is a grant-funded organization that partners with researchers worldwide on both translational and experimental pharmacological studies. [IRCCMH](#) serves as an educator and consultant to state governments, universities, clinicians, labs, and consumers. Its focus is to provide objective research on cannabis and its therapeutic use by bridging the gap between the lab and the patient.

**About the Cannabis Chemistry Subdivision of the American Chemical Society (CANN):**

CANN is the [leading chemistry authority](#) on the safe and beneficial processing, extraction, and purity analysis of cannabis products.

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